

## Transcription: Ed Kotrla

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*Today's date is Thursday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009, and my name is James Crabtree. I'm going to be interviewing Mr. Edward Kotrla. This interview is being done by phone, and I am doing the interview from the General Land Office Building in Austin, Texas, and Mr. Kotrla is at his home. Sir, thanks for taking the time to talk to us today. This interview really is your interview. It can go as long or as short as you'd like it to go, but really we want to record your memories of your time in the service so that we have that for posterity and future generations. So thank you for taking the time to talk to us today. I guess the first question, sir, is just to ask maybe a little bit about yourself, a little about your background, where you were born, where you are from, that sort of thing.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well, I was born in Taylor on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1917.

*Did you grow up there your whole life, sir?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Yes, outside of the time I spent in the service, I've always lived in Taylor.

*And what was your childhood like growing up in Taylor? I'm sure you've seen the community change a lot over the years.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well yes, it's quite a bit different because of the drought in the 20s, 1920s, and then the stock market crashed in '29, so I've seen a lot of changes.

*And did you grow up on a farm as a child?*

**Ed Kotrla:** No, we lived in town, but I spent a lot of time out in the country because I had relatives that had farms.

*And so you grew up in Taylor and lived in the community, do you remember where you were when you heard that Pearl Harbor had been attacked?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Yes, I was taking a cousin of mine from his wedding to his reception and had the radio on in the car.

*And what was your reaction to that? Did you think at that point you were going to be going to war yourself?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Yes, I told him I'd be going because I volunteered.

*So how much longer was it after Pearl Harbor before you were in the service?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well I applied for cadet exam in January at Randolph Field and I passed it, and I was sworn in on April the 3<sup>rd</sup> of '42, but at that time they didn't have room for a new class, so I stayed home until I was called into active duty in July of '42. Then I reported to Lackland Air Base.

*OK, what did your family and friends think about you joining the service? Were they worried for you at all?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well they were concerned, but they thought it was the right thing to do.

*Exactly. What was it like when you first got to Lackland and entered training? What were your initial thoughts?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well actually, I didn't stay at Lackland too long because after the examination and so forth, I told them about an injury I had as a youngster and so they reexamined me physically and they found an injured nerve and so they didn't think, well they weren't sure as to how I would do in high altitude flying. So I had three choices, either go to OCS, which I didn't want to do, so I chose meteorology and by the time I took the exam for that, the class was closed so I had to go to AM school.

*OK, tell us a little about that.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well then I went to Shepherd Field for basic training and AM school. They kind of wanted to keep me there as an instructor, but I turned that down, so I went with a group to B-17 school at Lockheed Air Base in Burbank, California.

*OK, and how long was the B-17 school?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Oh, about six weeks was all, and then we went to Jefferson barracks in St. Louis for overseas training.

*OK, tell us a little bit about what the training was like from day to day and what you learned.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well they put us through quite a strenuous training there, even with live ammunition, advancing under fire, all that kind of stuff. Also I had the misfortune of being on one of the guard platoons there when Roosevelt came through on inspection.

*OK, so you had a chance to see President Roosevelt?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Oh yes, I walked right beside him in that touring car, and him with that long cigarette holder.

*Wow, I imagine that was quite a memory for you to see the president in person like that.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well, it was an ordeal.

*That was just because of the pressure associated with the visit?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Yeah.

*How long ultimately were you in training for a year or so?*

**Ed Kotrla:** With overseas training?

*Yeah, all tolled from when you enlisted to when you finally were able to go deploy.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well, from Jefferson barracks, yeah we went to Camp Shanks in Orangeburg, New York, which is a suburb of New York City more or less, and we stayed there a couple of months, and then we shipped out July the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> out of New York City onto West Point, which was the Constitution that had been converted into a troop ship. So we were alone when we went out. We didn't know where we were going at the time. We zig-zagged out in the Atlantic, and we were headed south. I'll say this, even though there were subs around, they stopped on the equator and they had a Neptune party.

*Oh really?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Oh yes, it was quite an affair.

*So you were initiated in.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Yeah, in Neptune club. And so then we went our way south down below Rio, and then we went up into Rio and refueled, and then we headed back out just north of the Antarctic, and we hit quite a storm and we lost one of the screws going into Cape Town, South Africa, and then out of there we headed into Bombay, India.

*So when you departed from the United States, you didn't know where your final destination was.*

**Ed Kotrla:** No, well we got on board ship about two weeks after we were on board, we found out we weren't supposed to be on the ship.

*How did that come about, was it a mistake?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well, the papers had gone to the wrong area, and we were supposed to have flown over.

*Were you with your entire crew aboard the ship?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Oh, I guess it must've been around, there were 40 of us or so, and of course there were around 10,000 troops on board the ship. It was quite crowded.

*So how long did you end up spending aboard the ship?*

**Ed Kotrla:** It took us almost a month to get to Bombay.

*That's a long time.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Oh yeah, yes it was. From Bombay we transferred to a small, little British ship that had been converted from a destroyer that had been sunk during World War I. Now talk about a mess, and the food they tried to serve us was awful.

*Was it Indian food?*

**Ed Kotrla:** British. Of course they had an Indian cook, and he had sores all over his arms, and boy, in fact the guys got so hungry, I saw a friend of mine they thought that was cheese and ate some and it was soap. Boy, it was awful. In fact, we were accused of mutiny because we broke into a store room where there was stored rations for U.S. troops en route, and of course this

British captain came down, well they're quite pompous, and he was going to court marshal us as mutiny. We just held up a board with an imprint on there and showed it to him and asked him if he could read. So he shut up and left us alone, so we at least got some of these rations. So we went into Kurachi. At that time, that was part of India. Now it's part of Pakistan.

*What was your impression of those cities like Bombay and Kurachi when you first saw them?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well we didn't see Bombay, we just transferred up on the troop ship on the dock and walked on over, or marched on over to the little British transport.

*What was your impression of Kurachi?*

**Ed Kotrla:** We weren't allowed to go into Kurachi. The short time we stayed there in Kurachi, it was out in a little desert area, right next to that big hangar that the Germans had built for the Grand Zepelin, and so they were using that as a warehouse and we assembled the P-40's that were being shipped over. But then when we got the orders to go on to our base, we started flying east, but we developed a little engine trouble at Agra, so we stopped there overnight and we had a chance to go see the Taj Mahal and also the palace of the raja that had built it. Then after that we flew on into Assam, and our group kind of split up. So some went to a different base in Assam and also into China. So there wasn't too many of us, because this was a very small base there in the jungle that the U.S. was leasing from the British, and it was very primitive. They had batch of little cabins that were just built out of bamboo and stuff like that. Well, they didn't have enough, well our supply line hadn't been established yet from Calcutta up to our area, and so the British was feeding us. I lost 30 pounds in five months.

*So the food was really that bad.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well, there just wasn't enough of it. Also there wasn't enough airplanes down on the line, so I'd had a little construction experience so they put me in charge of utilities there. I had a ball doing that because I had use of a jeep 24 hours a day, which the CO didn't even have. So I took advantage of that a few nights and even one night we went night hunting.

*What did you end up hunting for?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well, I found a tiger and a cheetah, jackals, it was quite interesting.

*Did you actually kill them?*

**Ed Kotrla:** No, we didn't kill any of them but it was very interesting in being able to tour around and spot 'em.

*What were most of the troops like that were stationed with you, served with you at that base?*

**Ed Kotrla:** The morale was very good. Of course you always find something to complain about, there's no question about that, but as far as doing the work and so forth. And so finally after they got more airplanes down on the line, I was flying back down the line. So I had a crew of about eight to nine men, and we were crewing the C-87's. Even before that, in my first trip over the hump was Christmas of '43, my brother was naval attaché and he was stationed there in the same building as Chenault was in Kun Ming, China, and so I hopped a ride over there even though I wasn't on the line at the time, but I missed him. He had gone to a big function or

conference in Peking at the time. But then like I say, after I got a crew and we worked on the C-87's, and also we got a few 109's.

*What were your thoughts of your first time flying over the hump?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well, during the winter months, the weather was good, so it wasn't bad at all. But the time that flying over the hump got rough was during the monsoon season. That was usually from May on through August. That's when it rained a little better than 300 inches. One time coming back out of Kun Ming, actually we weren't allowed to land that trip because Japs were, the Japs had stolen some of our B-25's and they would come in and make raids on the China bases, and so we couldn't land because there was an alert, so we turned around and started back, and the wind was so strong even though we were indicating our flying speed, we actually were going backwards.

*Wow, that's amazing.*

**Ed Kotrla:** So we had to kind of angle over to make progress, and also the funny thing is our radio and main compass were acting up and so when we found out where we were, we were over Rangoon and at that time, they were occupied by the Japanese.

*I imagine that must've given you some concern when you realized where you were.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Yeah, the trip took so long where when we got to the base, we had very little gas left in the tanks.

*What was a normal mission like for you when you were flying that route? What type of things would you carry or transport?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Mostly we transported gasoline. In the C-87's we had gasoline in drums. In the C-109's they were in the bomb bay tanks. Of course, we also when they were building that air base for the B-29's in Shangtu, we flew parts of heavy equipment in there. Now that was something when they started building that. Well see, they built it out in a rice paddy, and we landed in the rice paddies at first, and then later on after they got the strip going, it was all built by hand. There was over 10,000 of the coolies working on that, and they took all the gravel and so forth from the river, which wasn't very far from where the strip was, and they crushed it by hand and brought it over by hand. It was a beautiful job. When you would be coming in and landing, it looked like you would be landing in a bunch of people, in a crowd of people. They just opened up in front and closed up in back of you. It was something else.

*During that time you were there, were you pretty much with one crew?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Yes.

*Tell us a little bit about your crew, where they were from and that sort of thing, how you guys got along.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Oh, it was very congenial, and there was only one other Texan on my crew. The rest of 'em were from Ohio and New York, Oklahoma, Indiana.

*How many men were in your crew?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well the most I ever had was nine. It varied, sometimes it was less, because they were transferred. Then in the spring of '45, a buddy of mine and I were sent down to Tesgon. They had installed the PLM, production line maintenance, and so our engineering officer, they sent us down there to see how it was set up and so forth. They thought about maybe installing it there at our base at TES4, and so we went down there, and we worked on C-54's.

*What was your favorite plane that you were able to fly during all that time, your preferred plane?*

**Ed Kotrla:** It didn't make any difference.

*Really, they were all the same?*

**Ed Kotrla:** It was flying.

*Yeah. And how many missions do you think you flew over the hump?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Oh I guess I put in pretty close to, a little over 800 hours.

*Wow, that's pretty good.*

**Ed Kotrla:** I imagine I got more hours than a lot of, than the pilots. Your pilots rotated after so many missions.

*In your role as a crew chief, what was it like, did you feel like you had an added weight of responsibility with every flight? Can you take us through what an average mission was like for you as a crew chief?*

**Ed Kotrla:** I didn't go out on every flight. We alternated. But you always were concerned, naturally, and also when the plane came back, you wanted to turn around as fast as possible. In fact, our base received the presidential, the unit citation for shipping more stuff over the hump during a certain time period.

*So it was pretty fair to say then that you guys constantly had flights coming and going, transporting goods, supplies.*

**Ed Kotrla:** The only time the planes stayed on the ground more than two or three hours was on the 50- and 100-hour inspections because then we went over the entire plane engines and everything because in between flights, the only thing we did, we made corrections outside of refueling and so forth, we made the corrections that the pilot had noted on his log. We kept the planes in the air.

*During that time, since you were in such a remote spot, did you have much contact with letters from your family or friends back home, or news from back home?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well, the mail.

*How often would you be able to get mail?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well after the flying line was established, it came in fairly regularly. Of course it took quite a while to get over there, from the time they wrote it to the time we received it. Also, the line of communication wasn't always the most adapt, because I lost an engine on one flight going into Chengtu, and so I stayed with the plane there while they were going to ship the engine over for me to replace, and while I was there, well my father died back in the States, and I got a notice from the Red Cross, and my father had already, he had died two weeks prior to that.

*Wow, so it took them two weeks to get the word to you, wow.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Even through the Red Cross. Of course Red Cross wasn't too efficient over there anyway.

*That's horrible though. During the time that you were there, did you have a wife or girlfriend back home?*

**Ed Kotrla:** No, I didn't, that's one reason I didn't get married or get too serious.

*So how long ultimately did you end up being stationed there in India and doing those missions?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well, as I say, in the spring of '45, we were sent on temporary duty down to Tesgon, and of course the war was over in August of '45. We were supposed to have already been back home, so we'd been over there over two years, and also had the points, but the CO there at Tesgon, most of all his guys even though it was a larger base, they were more or less new fellows from the States, so we were old and we were in charge of inspections at that time, and he wouldn't release us. So this buddy of mine and I got a three-day pass and hopped a ride to Calcutta because our old friend engineering officer from our old base from Tespor had been made the chief engineering officer of the China/Burma wing in engineering, and so we made a trip down there, and when we walked in his office, he made a comment that I'm not gonna repeat, why are you still here? And so to make a long story short, he said you'll be on your way in two weeks. So sure enough, in two weeks, we were on our way. But when we made the trip from Tesgon in a small plane to catch the big plane to take us, we were supposed to have been back in the States in three days, there was a shave tail that was just fresh from the States, he says no, you can't go on that, even though we had the orders that says so. You've got to go over here first. So he sent us to a camp. There were around 10,000 to 15,000 guys there in this camp in tents, and it so happened that when we walked into the canteen there, the Red Cross girl that was there was on the telephone and we knew her from our old base, and she was a girlfriend of the colonel, this engineering officer. When he found out, he wanted to talk to us, he did, and come to find out this lieutenant down there in \_\_\_ and traffic had lost over 10,000 guys that were supposed to have been home by putting them in that camp, and they had been looking for him.

*Why do you think it was that he was ordering people into that camp?*

**Ed Kotrla:** He just didn't know what he was doing. That's one reason I didn't want to go to a fiesta.

*Yeah, he must've not done so well there, if he was having problems like that.*

**Ed Kotrla:** No, he was reprimanded I found out later.

*So once that was cleared up, then you were finally put on a plane and sent back home?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well yeah, but it took a while because we had lost our connection, so we stopped off in Kurachi and we stayed there – well see, there was a backlog on all these guys, and so we stayed a couple of weeks in Kurachi, which we enjoyed because we could leave the base, and also we had nice pilots like from Kurachi we flew over Iraq, over the Tigris and Euphrates valley which at that time was considered as maybe the Garden of Eden, and then we developed all problem again in Cairo, so we spent the night in Cairo, so we got to see the city a little bit, and then we flew over the pyramids and so forth, flying over and refueled in Tripoli, and then into Casablanca, and we spent a couple of weeks there. I run into an old buddy of mine that had been stationed in China, and on the way back, of course once you got on a plane to fly back it didn't take long, because we stopped off at the Azores and refueled, and then stopped in Iceland and refueled and came on in.

*You really saw a lot of the world then just by being in the service during the war and being stationed in India and just your route coming back alone was like traveling around the world.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Yeah, and then so when I got back into Fort Dixon, New York, there wasn't any, see, I was traveling by myself by then because my orders read, had temporary duty, Love Field, Dallas, and so the sergeant there, he was a real nice, he was an old timer, so he says there's no troop trains going out right now, but if you'll wait a couple of days or so, I think I can get you a state room, and sure enough he got me a state room out of New York on a train. So I had a nice ride on into Dallas.

*Yeah, and at that point, did your folks and family know when you were going to be coming home?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Oh yes, in fact my sister and her husband met me in Dallas as I got off the train because they were living in Fort Worth at the time. So I stayed with them. I didn't check in the base until the next day, and so, but they didn't know just when I'd be transferred to Randolph or discharged. So I even got a three-day pass from Love Field, and went duck hunting down the coast.

*So describe for us what it was like when you finally got back home to Texas and you saw your family for the first time. Do you still remember that day and what that was like?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well, the first thing, especially my mother said what's wrong with you? Because I was yellow because of all the aderbund that we had to take overseas.

*So that was her first impression was that your skin color -*

**Ed Kotrla:** Yeah.

*Did it seem strange to you to be back home and be able to just be around friends and family and relax again? Did it take some time to adapt to that?*

**Ed Kotrla:** No, it didn't take long.

*So after you got back and then you finished your liberty they gave you, then I imagine you were eventually assigned back to Randolph you said?*



**Ed Kotrla:** Yes.

*And how much longer were you there before you were finally discharged?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Oh, just the next day.

*OK, so pretty quick.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Oh yeah, you went there to get your final discharge.

*To go back a little bit, do you remember where you were when you heard that the bomb had been dropped on Japan?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Oh yes.

*Describe for us what that was like.*

**Ed Kotrla:** I was on the line at the office, and then we celebrated.

*How was the word passed? Was it via cable or - ?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Radio.

*Radio, OK. Describe kind of what the celebration was like that day.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well, we knew we would be going home sooner or later. No, we had quite a celebration on the base because our mess sergeant, he was from Texas, and so he dug a pit and had a barbecue, I mean had a couple of steers on there. That was the best way to cook that raw meat.

*Yeah, I bet. Well that's great. Are there any particular moments you remember that stand out from your time in the service, interesting stories or incidents you'd want to share?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Like what?

*Humorous anecdotes, or interesting people that you met, or harrowing experiences aboard any of the flights or any of that sort of thing?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well, we had quite a character there on our base in Tespor. He'd been a mortician at home back in the States, but his IQ must've been way up there, but he was eccentric. He just didn't care about anything or anybody. He just went his own way and he was irresponsible. In fact one time he was called up before the CO and he looked at the CO and he said sir, I put black bow ties on better men than you. I mean he was just that way. And the only thing that he would so more or less responsibly was guard the runway, because they had to guard the runway to keep wild animals off, and so there was a herd of wild water buffalo and they were slow in getting off the runway, and the plane was coming in, so he walked on over there and he took his rifle by the barrel and he whacked across the rump of this bull and he broke the tail of the bull but he broke the stock off his rifle. We called the quartermaster and told him what happened and told him he'd have to pay for the gun. He carried those pieces around with him for a long time until the

CO got there. So he got a new rifle. And he had a nose on every person on the base. He was writing a book.

*Did he ever write it?*

**Ed Kotrla:** I don't know, I never saw it. And he already had the title he said, From the Womb to the Tomb. He was a character.

*Was he ever part of your crew?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Oh no, no, no one would use him as a crew member.

*Wow. How many men do you think were stationed at that base with you guys?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Probably only about 200 or 300.

*So that was pretty small then.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Oh it was a small base. I don't know just how many, but it wasn't too many.

*During your time there, did you guys ever have much interaction with the locals in the area?*

**Ed Kotrla:** No, we didn't have time. Well, when I was in charge of utilities, well I had some native workers. In fact, that's where I had to learn a little bit of Hindustani so I could communicate. But outside of that, that Tesfor was a town, a pretty good-sized town, but it was several miles away, and it wasn't much there to see outside of some native temples. So we didn't go to town very often.

*I know you guys had a very high operational tempo with a lot of the flights taking place and that sort of thing. Was there any down time at all, and if so how would you pass the down time?*

**Ed Kotrla:** How do you mean down time?

*Time that you weren't flying or preparing to fly.*

**Ed Kotrla:** There was no down time.

*Never any down time.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Oh no.

*How many flights then a day would an average crew, would a crew man go on one or two flights a day?*

**Ed Kotrla:** The flights would take anywhere from, it depends on where we went in China, from 8 to 12 hours, 14 hours round trip, so if the plane made one and a half trips a day, that would be about it. I know one time, well during the time we had to push on some supplies over into China, I've forgotten how many, my crew, well I didn't get any sleep for 72 hours. And during that time, I made three trips.

*So there was never, that high tempo pretty much existed for the entire time you were there.*

**Ed Kotrla:** There was no slack time because for a long time, we were the only source, the bases in Assam Valley were the only more or less supply train over into China because Japan had taken over a large part of China, and also they were up in Burma, and in fact the early part that I mentioned the time that I lost that weight, the best food was a little restaurant just right outside the gate of the base, but he didn't stay there too long because we found out he was a Japanese spy.

*Oh really, wow. That's interesting.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Yeah, the Japs weren't too far from us.

*Did you ever see them while you were flying? Could you see their forces on the ground or did you ever encounter any of their planes?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Yeah, we could see, when Silva was down in Burma, you could see the fire going on down there, and now and then we had to watch out for Japanese planes that were flying.

*Did you ever see any during your missions?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Yeah.

*What were you guys trained to do in the event that you did see one?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Go for a cloud. They even took away our tommy guns because we were carrying those oil drums with gasoline, and if there had been any fumes or anything in there, and a hot cartridge -

*That makes sense. Did you have any American fighters that could support you on any of those missions?*

**Ed Kotrla:** No.

*None at all, yeah. What about when you got into China on a mission and landed?*

**Ed Kotrla:** We got some pretty good decent food.

*Did you have a chance to interact much with the American troops that were there that were fighting the Japanese front lines?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Not very long because about all you did do, you unloaded and the most interaction I had was on that flight I made over Christmas of '43, but I wasn't crewing then, and during that time I lost the engines up in Chengtu because I went into Chengtu.

*So basically you would land, get offload, maybe refuel and turn around?*

**Ed Kotrla:** No, you didn't refuel over there. If you had extra gas for the return trip, you even unloaded some gas out of your wing tanks because gas was at premium over there.

*Sure, that makes sense.*

**Ed Kotrla:** No, we never refueled over there because we were taking fuel there.

*Did you ever evacuate any troops out of there medically that needed to return to the States?*

**Ed Kotrla:** No, now some of the planes would bring back some Chinese to train because we'd bring them over the hump and then they would transfer them on back further back into some based in India and they trained 'em. But you didn't want to bring those, in fact I knocked a door off of my airplane, a cargo door so I wouldn't be bringing any of those back with us. You didn't have oxygen masks for them and they would get sick, and it would be hard to clean up the plane.

*Because they would vomit?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Oh yes. So it was one of those things.

*So I take it then that all the members of the crew though would wear oxygen masks on those flights.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Oh yes.

*Describe for us a little bit what those oxygen masks were like.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well back on those days they were just small masks that you had over your nose and mouth.

*At what point would you know that you had to put those on? Reach a certain elevation?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Yeah, always over 10,000 feet, because we flew up over 30,000.

*Yeah, wow.*

**Ed Kotrla:** At that time, it was the highest flying that the Air Force did, or was being done in the world at the time.

*Yeah, wow. So the troops that were being carried, the Chinese troops and stuff, they wouldn't have the oxygen masks, and I imagine it was incredibly cold, too.*

**Ed Kotrla:** You didn't have that much oxygen supply for 'em anyway. You only had a small tank, just enough for, there was only four crew members on the flight.

*OK, yeah. What was the type of uniform that the crew would wear? I imagine you would have to dress warmly at those elevations.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Yeah, we had fur-lined suits.

*Was that usually enough to keep you warm?*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well, you could feel the cold because you could see on your outside thermometer. I saw 55 and 60 below.

*Yeah, that's pretty cold.*

**Ed Kotrla:** In fact, working on the engine with gasoline and so forth, your cuticles would be very dry, and even though you had fur-lined gloves and so forth, every now and then you'd feel your hands getting real warm, and you knew that your cuticles were bleeding.

*That's something else. I don't think most people could ever relate to that. Well sir, I really appreciate you taking the time to let us talk to you, interview you today. Like I mentioned earlier, we record these interviews and save them in our archives here at the Land Office and also for posterity. The hope is that future generations will be able to listen to these interviews and understand a little bit about the service and sacrifice that our members of the Armed Forces have made through the years. What we'll also do is make copies of this interview to give to you and that you can give to any of your friends or family that might want them. We'll put it on a CD and mail them to you when they've been printed. But one thing I always ask towards the end of the interview is if there's any thoughts that you'd want to share with anybody that's listening, especially future generations about your time in the service or the men that you served with or any of that sort of thing, any sort of wisdom that you'd want to impart.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Concerning what?

*If there's any particular thing that you'd want folks to remember about your service or the service of the troops that you served with during the war.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well, the attitude, well of course back in those days it's different than what it is now. We were brought up and our educational system was much different back then than it is now, and also I don't think they're teaching history the way they used to.

*Yeah, I think you're right.*

**Ed Kotrla:** And I'm afraid that a lot of the present generation, they don't have the same feeling for our country. Well, they haven't had the background on our history that made this country and what made it to appreciate it, so they don't have the same feeling for it. It's gotten to a point where it's a me generation.

*Well that's one thing we're hoping to make a little bit of a difference with this program at least is that these stories aren't going to be forgotten, at least not by our program in the General Land Office. We're going to try to save these stories so people can hear them and remember them. I know that Commissioner Jerry Patterson is our land commissioner, he served as a Marine in Vietnam, I myself was a Marine, and a lot of people that work here are veterans, but I think a lot of people who work here, too, are very patriotic and they love history, and so we're trying to preserve that history so it won't be forgotten. We really do appreciate your service and your sacrifice, and I know that goes from Commissioner Patterson to everybody here at the Land Office. So we really do thank you for that and for just sharing with us a little bit of your story, too. It means a lot to us. Well, I really appreciate you, sir, taking the time to talk to us today and what we'll do is after this interview is over is I'll go ahead and begin the process of making recordings of this interview and we'll get those sent out to you and then if you have any photos or anything that you'd want to share with us from your time in service, even if it's just copies, we can take those and scan them and save them in your file and even put them on our website at some point if you'd allow us to do that.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well a lot of the prints that were taken back in those days, they are fading, and I'm not in too many pictures. I took pictures, but not of me.

*Well we would love to see those, too. We've interviewed a lot of different veterans for this program and there's some that have sent us pictures of their units or pictures of the ships that they served on, or some of those things as well, and they always say a picture is worth 1,000 words, so we always like to have pictures as well.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well I've got an album, but I don't have any duplicates.

*OK, yes sir, well we might figure out a way that we can make a copy of that or something so we can save those if you'd allow us to do that.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well, I don't know how to get 'em over to you because I'm not going to take 'em out of the album.

*Yeah, I don't blame you for that.*

**Ed Kotrla:** And I don't want to ship the whole album over there. I think we'll pass on that.

*No, I understand. Well sir, I really do again appreciate you taking the time today to talk to us and we thank you for your service to our nation, and I think you have my phone number so give me a call at any point if there's anything you need from us and then as soon as we get all these copies made, I'll be putting them in the mail to you.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Did you say that you hadn't had any interviews with anyone from the CBI?

*No, I hadn't. You're the first one we've interviewed.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well I know a few other guys, I'll pass the word on to them.

*Oh yes sir, please do. Just give them my number and have them call me and we're always looking for veterans to interview and especially World War II veterans.*

**Ed Kotrla:** Well that's who I'm talking about, because there are several there in Austin.

*Well yes sir, have them just give me a call or if you want call me and give me their numbers and I can call them as well. We'd love to do that. Let me go ahead and stop the recorder so we don't put their phone numbers on the interview. So I'll stop the recorder –*

**Ed Kotrla:** OK.

*[End of recording]*